

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



1  
Ag 84 Pro  
Cop: 2

#917

# TRUTH IN SEED LABELING



U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
NATIONAL SEED CULTURE LABORATORY

NOV 1969

CURRENT SEED RECORDS

# IN BRIEF . . .

Because of the Federal Seed Act, seed buying need not be hit or miss. The labels required on all seed moving across State lines give you most of the information you need to start a successful planting. Labels required by the Act show:

**Name of kind and variety**—So the buyer can choose the variety best suited for his needs.

**Seed purity**—The percentage of each kind or variety of seed and the amount of weed seeds and other unwanted matter in the seed.

**Germination**—The percentage of the seeds which are expected to grow into normal plants under ideal conditions.

## PROTECTION AGAINST MISLABELED SEED

The Federal Seed Act helps protect the farmer, marketer, and consumer from mislabeled seed.

It was passed by Congress in 1939 to give this truth-in-labeling protection to farmers and other buyers of agricultural and vegetable seeds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Consumer and Marketing Service administers and enforces the law with help of State seed agencies in each of the 50 States.

All States have seed laws requiring truthful labeling of seed offered for sale. The Federal Seed Act complements these laws by regulating seed moving between the States as well as seed imported into the United States.

To assure correct labeling, seed technologists examine samples of vegetable and agricultural seeds to determine what kinds of seed are in the container, how much of each kind, the number of weed seeds, and the percentage of inert matter (such as dirt and stones). They grow samples to determine the percentage of seeds that are expected to produce normal plants. All this information and more must be on the label.

By requiring truthful labeling and by prohibiting false advertising, the Federal Seed Act enables you to make an intelligent selection based on fact—not fiction.

# HOW TO READ THE LABEL

## Purity

You don't have to guess at the contents of a seed container. The Act requires detailed labels on all farm and grass seed. Labels must indicate the percentage of each kind of seed present in excess of 5 percent. The percentages of other crop seeds, weed seeds, and inert matter (chaff, dirt, stones) must also be indicated.

## Noxious-Weed Seeds

Some weed seeds are particularly harmful in certain areas. Each State has a list of seeds which it considers "noxious," or harmful. The Federal Seed Act requires all farm and grass seed shipped into the State to be labeled to show the name and number per unit of weight of these seeds present. If they are present, they may not exceed the limits set by the State.

## Origin

Certain seeds (alfalfa, red clover, white clover, and field corn other than hybrids) which are grown in one area may not grow well in other areas. So the label must show the State or country of origin of these seeds. In this way you can select seed suited to your locality.

ST-2016-6







**Purity Analysis**—Seed analysts separate seed mixture to find out how much of each kind of seed or waste matter it contains.

BN-13524

**Growth Chamber**—One of the ways to determine whether varieties are correctly labeled is to study the mature plant. In this growth chamber, growing conditions are controlled to speed the plant to maturity.

## Germination

Germination rate tells you what percentage of the seeds is expected to produce normal plants under ideal conditions. A rate of 85 percent, for example, means that 85 out of every 100 pure seeds—given ideal care and growing conditions—will develop adequately.

It's wise to check seed labels to see when the seed was tested for germination. Seed loses its ability to grow or develop as it becomes older—especially in warm, humid areas. Because of this, it must have been tested within 6 months before it leaves the State. In most States, it must have been tested within 9 months before sale.

Hermetically sealed seed may be shipped interstate for a longer period of time after testing—24 months—if it is packaged as required under the Federal Seed Act.

## Vegetable Seed

The vegetable seeds you buy—for gardening or truck

farming—require less labeling information than other agricultural and lawn seeds. Only the kind and name of the variety must be shown on containers of 1 pound or less if the seed is above a certain germination standard. (If labels on farm seeds don't list the variety name, they must say "Variety – Not Stated.") Also, vegetable seeds in containers of 1 pound or less with a germination rate below certain standards established by rules under the Federal Seed Act must be plainly marked "Below Standard" and must show the percentage of germination and the date of the germination test. Vegetable seed in containers of more than 1 pound must always show the germination percentage and the date of test.

## Imported Seed

USDA and the U.S. Department of the Treasury enforce the foreign commerce provisions of the Federal Seed Act to insure that imported seed is of at least minimum quality. Each lot of seed to be imported into the United

States is sampled at the port of entry by customs inspectors. The sample is sent to one of the four Federal seed laboratories for testing, to make sure it meets the minimum standards of the Act before the seed lot is permitted to enter this country.

## VIOLATIONS

To determine whether seed is correctly labeled, State seed inspectors visit seed stores and routinely draw samples for testing by State and Federal seed laboratories.

Seed officials also examine seed catalogues and other seed advertisements to guard against false or misleading statements.

Violators may be prosecuted either in criminal proceedings or in civil suits. The seed may be seized by Federal courts and required to be relabeled, destroyed, or used for other purposes. Warning notices are sent to shippers for minor violations.

**Germination**—To determine the germination rate, seeds are rolled up on a paper towel and placed in a germinator where the temperature, humidity, and light are controlled 24 hours a day to provide best growing conditions. In time, the roll is removed from the germinator, and the analyst counts the normal seedlings.



N-55318

Seed analysts separate seed mixture to find out  
 if it contains seed or waste matter it contains.

**Growth Chamber**—One of the ways to determine whether varieties  
 incorrectly labeled is to study the mature plant. In this growth  
 chamber, growing conditions are controlled to speed the plant to  
 maturity.

States is sampled at the port of entry by customs inspectors.  
 The sample is sent to one of the four Federal seed labora-  
 tories for testing, to make sure it meets the minimum  
 standards of the Act before the seed lot is permitted to  
 enter this country.

## VIOLATIONS

To determine whether seed is correctly labeled, State  
 seed inspectors visit seed stores and routinely draw samples  
 for testing by State and Federal seed laboratories.

Seed officials also examine seed catalogues and other  
 seed advertisements to guard against false or misleading  
 statements.

Violators may be prosecuted either in criminal pro-  
 ceedings or in civil suits. The seed may be seized by Fed-  
 eral courts and required to be relabeled, destroyed, or used  
 for other purposes. Warning notices are sent to shippers  
 for minor violations.




N-55308



N-55318

**Seed Label**—This is  
 what to look for on the  
 seed you buy. If you select  
 seed adapted to your  
 needs and growing condi-  
 tions, you will be well on  
 your way to a successful  
 growing season.

 <b>Farmers Seed Co.</b>	
<small>(Name or code designation)</small> <b>Farmersville, Iowa</b>	
<b>Clark 63</b> <small>(Variety)</small>	<b>Soybean</b> <small>(Kind of seed)</small>
<b>Lot No.</b> <b>X-100</b>	
<b>Where grown</b> <b>Illinois</b>	
Pure seed	99.00 %
Inert matter	.95 %
Weed seed .01 %	Crop seed .04 %
Germination	90 %
Hard seed	none %
<b>Total germination and hard seed</b> --- %	
<b>Date of test</b> <b>March 1969</b>	
<small>(Month)</small> <b>None</b> <small>(Year)</small>	
<b>Noxious weed seeds</b> ---	



This publication supersedes C&MS-49, "The Federal Seed Act."  
September 1969

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1969—O-352-584

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 10 cents